[Kevin Savetz is a freelance writer and recovering MUD addict living in Arcata, California. His e-mail address is **"savetz@rahul.net"** - *Editor*]

GUTENBERG LIVES

By Kevin M. Savetz

What if books were free? What if anyone could get a copy of whatever books he or she wanted? Would libraries become extinct? Would bookstores crumble?

When Johann Gutenberg invented movable type in the 1400s, the cost of books plummeted to a fraction of their previous prices, and thousands of hours were saved producing them. For the first time, the general public had access to books.

Michael Hart wants to lead a similar revolution.

In 1971, Michael Hart was given $100,000,000 in computer time by the operators of the **Xerox Sigma V mainframe** at the **University of Illinois**. Hart, in an effort to "earn" his free computer time, typed in the Declaration of Independence and attempted to distribute it across the network Q so everyone could have one.

With that act, **Project Gutenberg** was born. Today, this nonprofit organization releases electronic text versions of public-domain literature. Their goal is to give away one hundred billion electronic texts by the end of 2001. That is, they hope to release 10,000 titles and distribute each to 100 million people. "There are predicted to be a billion people on the networks by 2001. if we hit 10% of them, that's a trillion," says Hart, Executive Director of Project Gutenberg.

The Project Gutenberg volunteers release an electronic edition of a works a short time after that book reaches the public domain. Each document is in plain-vanilla ASCII, so that everyone using anything from Apples to Z-80s are able to read them. Fancy graphics and text formatting are spurned in favor of small, easily shared documents.

Titles already released include classic literature such as ***Aesop's Fables***, ***Alice in Wonderland***, ***Moby Dick***, and works of **Shakespeare**; Historical documents such as the **Magna Carta**, **U.S. Declaration of Independence**, and the **U.S. Constitution**; reference books such as ***Roget's Thesaurus***, almanacs, census data, the ***CIA World Fact Book*** and mathematical constants; and religious documents such as the ***Bible*** and the ***Book of Mormon***.

Why would anyone want to read a book on a computer rather than... well, from a book? "The biggest advantage of electronic books," Michael Hart says, "is they cost about one one-hundredth of what a book costs. If you buy a copy of Alice in Wonderland right now, even in paperback, it will cost at least five bucks. On a 1.44-megabyte floppy, the same book uses a nickel's worth of space."

Because electronic texts (or **"e-texts"**) are stored on a computer, it is much simpler to search a book - or an entire library - for specific information. Research using e-texts is faster and easier than using traditional media. "My favorite example," Hart says, "is a paper I wrote on death and marriage in *Hamlet*, *MacBeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *Othello*. This is the kind of paper you couldn't even write without a computer. There are too many citations for even a Shakespeare scholar - you would be up to the ceiling in index cards."

"I am hoping - presuming almost, that as books are added to the public domain electronic library, these kinds of papers will be written. Your everyday research paper is **90% research** and **10% writing**. With e-texts, it will be **10% research** and **90% writing** the paper," he says. Research using e-texts doesn't require trips to the library and allows more time for thinking about what to write rather than shuffling pages. According to Hart, because the actual research will take less time, researchers will have more time for original thought.

"The term 'exhaustive research' will disappear, because it won't exhaust you anymore," he says. "Painstaking research will be as far in the past as painstaking hand-copying in the monasteries."

Although the idea of reading books on a computer screen may seem far-fetched now, Hart believes that as the cost of storing information and accessing networks continues to fall, electronic texts will become a standard means of reading and retrieving information. "I'm not saying books are going to completely die out in the next ten years, but this is an idea whose time has come," Hart says.

So far, the volunteer staff has released about 70 texts in electronic form. Hart says the number of volunteers who type or scan books triples every year. There are currently about 200 volunteers. Hart has only met about 5% of them - the rest are network users near and far. For the past three years, the project has released twice the number of books as the previous year. "This doubling curve will get us to our goal of 10,000 books by 2001," Hart says.

Obviously, libraries aren't extinct, yet. Although they are a boon for research and searching, electronic texts do have drawbacks for the casual reader. You can't read one in the bath, and you might hesitate to tote a portable computer with you on public transit, just to catch the last chapter of *Moby Dick*. Still, Hart is betting on the near future, when storage will be cheap, computers will be even more portable, and screens will be easier to read. By the time the 10,000th e-text rolls off the presses in the year 2001, this will be undoubtedly be the case.

One technical problem slowing the release of texts lies in **copyright law**. Unless given specific permission, Project Gutenberg may only reproduce works that are in the public domain - uncopyrighted. Under current copyright law, this means the author needs to have been dead for 50 years. So, don't expect too many best sellers to be given away on the Internet archives.

Although the idea of giving free books to the masses is an honorable one, will Project Gutenberg's efforts have a similar effect to Johann Gutenberg's? Johann's efforts made inexpensive books available to the general public. Project Gutenberg has made books even less expensive - nearly free, even considering transfer time and storage space. However, for the time being, the general public cannot collect on Project Gutenberg's promise because those of us with access to home computers and online services are in the minority. Until everyone uses the Internet or has a CD-ROM drive, Project Gutenberg cannot have the

impact that Johann Gutenberg's movable type did over 500 years ago.

BOOKS ON CD-ROM

In July, **Walnut Creek CD-ROM** released a CD-ROM containing all of Project Gutenberg's current collection of e-texts. The CD-ROM conforms to ISO-9660, which is the most common and generic format. It will work with almost any system. All the files are in plain vanilla ASCII, so that they can be used with the widest variety of computers and software.

The price is **$39.95** (plus sales tax in California,) plus $5 shipping and handling per order. For more information, contact Bob Bruce, Walnut Creek CDROM, 1547 Palos Verdes, Suite 260, Walnut Creek, CA, 94596. (800)786-9907. Or send electronic mail to **"orders@cdrom.com"**.

The company plans to update the CD-ROM with new e-texts every six months. Updates will be available by subscription. Part of the proceeds from the sale of the disc go to Project Gutenberg to help pay for the creation of new e-texts. The company offers a variety of CD-ROMS - for a list, you can FTP the latest catalog from ftp.cdrom.com:/cdrom/catalog, or send e-mail to **"info@cdrom.com"**.

[Kevin Savetz is a freelance writer based in Arcata, California. His e-mail address is **"savetz@rahul.net"**. His two cats are of the Cheshire variety - *Editor*]

STYLE GUIDES FOR ELECTRONIC MAIL

By Jack Rickard

John Goodwin has written two electronic books on the topic of the Internet that are both available in electronic form. His first work was **EMAIL 101** and serves as an introduction to the Internet and the use of electronic mail. Updated to **version 2.5** this past July, it is addressed primarily toward those in the academic or business communities who may want to use the **Internet** to communicate, but who may be less than enthralled with the technological magic of it all. It reduces use of basic Internet services to something usable by normal humans with a normal attention span. Technoids may find it a little basic. EMAIL 101 is avail-

ACCESSING THE PROJECT GUTENBURG ARCHIVES

For further information or to retrieve electronic books via FTP (the Internet's file transfer protocol,) anonymous FTP directly to the Project Gutenberg archives: mrcnext.cso.uiuc.edu (128.174.201.12). Texts are available in directories sorted by the year of release: etext/etext91, etext/etext92, and etext/etext93. For more information about Project Gutenberg and the current newsletter, look in directory etext/articles.

Project Gutenberg files are available from other FTP sites as well:
nptn.org (192.55.234.52) in /pub/e.texts/gutenberg
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quake.think.com (192.31.181.1) in /pub/etext91 or /pub/etext92
simtel20.army.mil or (192.88.110.20) in pd1:<msdos.books>
wuarchive.wustl.edu (128.252.135.4) in /mirrors/msdos/books

The Almanac Information Server, located at Oregon State University, allows text retrieval via electronic mail. To retrieve a file via e- mail, first send the following line by itself to almanac@oes.orst.edu send gutenberg catalog This will instruct you how to send further requests, and will list the available files. For example, to retrieve Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, send to almanac@oes.orst.edu send gutenberg alice

E-mail questions about Project Gutenberg to: dircompg@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu.

E-texts released in 1993, in directory /etext/etext93:
(Check archive site for current filenames - xxx's denote version numbers which change periodically.)

A Princess of Mars [Mars #1]	pmars10x.xxx
Aladdin and the Magic Lamp	alad10xx.xxx
Anne of the Island	iland10x.xxx
Black Experience (Coombs)	blexp10x.xxx
Civil Disobedience, Thoreau	civil10x.xxx
Clinton's Inaugural Address	clintonx.xxx
Decartes' Reason Discourse	dcart10x.xxx
Email 101 by John Goodwin	email025.xxx
Gods of Mars, [Mars #2]	gmars10x.xxx
LOC Workshop on Etexts	locet10x.xxx
Milton's Paradise Regained	rgain10x.xxx
NREN, by Jean Armour Polly	nren210x.xxx
Pi (circumference/diameter)	pimil10x.xxx
Red Badge of Courage, Crane	badge10x.xxx
Surfing the Internet	Surf10xx.xxx
The 32nd Mersenne Prime	32prl10x.xxx
The Communist Manifesto	manif10x.xxx
The Dawn of Amateur Radio	radio10x.xxx
The First 100,000 Primes	prime10x.xxx
The Marvelous Land of Oz	ozland10.xxx
The Number "e" [Natural Log]	ee610xxx.xxx
The Scarlet Pimpernel	scarp10x.xxx
The Square Root of Two	2sqrt10x.xxx
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz	wizoz10x.xxx
The World Factbook	world192.xxx
Thuvia, Maid of Mars [#4]	mmars10x.xxx
Tom Sawyer [Wiretap/Twain]	sawyr10x.xxx
Warlord of Mars, [Mars #3]	wmars10x.xxx
What Is Man? Mark Twain	wman10xx.xxx

E-texts released in 1992, in directory /etext/etext92

1991 CIA World Factbook	world91a.xxx
A Christmas Carol (Dickens)	carol10x.xxx
Aesop's Fables (Advantage)	aesopa10.xxx
Anne of Avonlea	aven10xx.xxx
Anne of Green Gables	anne10xx.xxx
Data From the 1990 Census	uscen901.xxx
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde #1	hyde10xx.xxx
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde #2	hydea10x.xxx
Far From the Madding Crowd	crowd13x.xxx
Frederick Douglass	duglas10.xxx
Herland for Mother's Day	hrlnd10x.xxx
Hitchhiker Internet Guide	hhgi10xx.xxx
New Etext of Bible (KJV)	bible10x.xxx
NorthWestNet NUSIRG Guide	nusirg10.xxx
O Pioneers! Willa Cather	opion10x.xxx
Paradise Lost (Reben)	plrabn11.xxx
Song of the Lark (Cather)	song10xx.xxx
Sophocles' Oedipus Trilogy	oedip10x.xxx
The 1990 US Census (2nd)	usfm10xx.xxx
The Gift of the Magi-O Henry	magi10.txt
The Hackers' Dictionary	jargn10x.xxx
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow	sleep10x.xxx
The Scarlet Letter	scrlt10x.xxx
The Time Machine-HG Wells	timem10x.xxx
The War of the Worlds-HGW	warw10xx.xxx
Zen & the Art of Internet	zen10xxx.xxx

E-texts released in 1991, in directory /etext/etext91

1990 CIA World Factbook	world12x.xxx
Aesop's Fables	aesop11x.xxx
Alice In Wonderland	alice29x.xxx
Moby Dick	moby xxxx.xxx
Paradise Lost	plboss11.xxx
Peter Pan (for US only)	peter14a.xxx
Roget's Thesaurus	roget12x.xxx
The Book of Mormon	mormon13.xxx
The Federalist Papers	feder12x.xxx
The Hunting of the Snark	snark12x.xxx
The Song of Hiawatha	hisong11.xxx
Through the Looking Glass	iglass16.xxx